

The US Must Support a New Free Venezuela

By [Walid Phares](#) (February 2019)



Protests against Maduro, courtesy of CNN

With the mass demonstrations in Caracas and other Venezuelan cities spreading and persisting against the Maduro regime, Washington and other Western capitals are quickly shifting gears to support a change of government in the embattled country. This is a crucial moment as a major anti-American, pro-Iran, Marxist regime in the Western Hemisphere is facing an existential crisis from within. What should the United States and its allies do now?

The fact that there are now two leaders both claiming to be the legitimate President of Venezuela is a direct consequence of years of oppression, first by the Chavez regime and then continued by Maduro. The far-left radical group that seized power and allied itself with authoritarian regimes in Latin

America and beyond failed to meet the basic economic needs of Venezuelans, despite the fact that the country has one of the largest reserves of oil and energy in the world. Shortages of food and supplies led to demonstrations under Chavez—and when hyperinflation and economic collapse intensified under Maduro, so did the demonstrations.

Maduro then waged a massive suppression campaign against the protesters, leading to bloodshed, mass arrests, torture and disappearances, all documented by international organizations. Political violence, and social and economic collapse then led to a severe refugee crisis, with more than three million Venezuelans crossing into Colombia and Brazil and spreading across South America. Another extension of the crisis could lead to the exodus of more than five million citizens. On these grounds alone, the United Nations and the outside world have the obligation to intervene. But Maduro is not without friends.

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